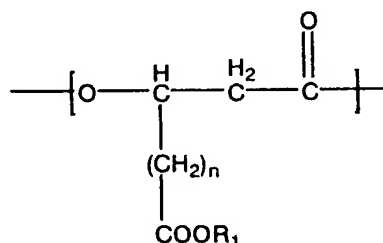


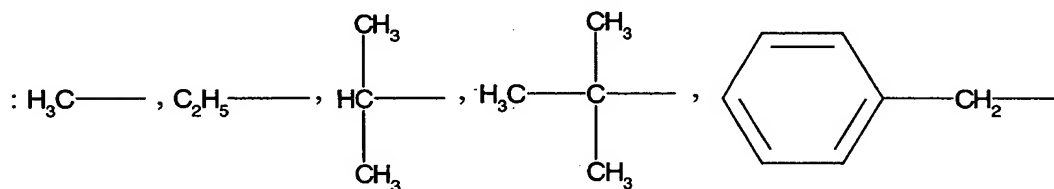
CLAIMS

1. In a charge control agent for controlling a charge of powder or granules, wherein the charge control agent comprises a polyhydroxyalkanoate having at least one kind of 3-hydroxy- ω -carboxyalkanoic acid unit represented by the chemical formula (1):



$$n = 1-8 \quad (1)$$

wherein n is an integer selected from the range shown in the same chemical formula; R₁ is an H, Na or K atom,
10 or

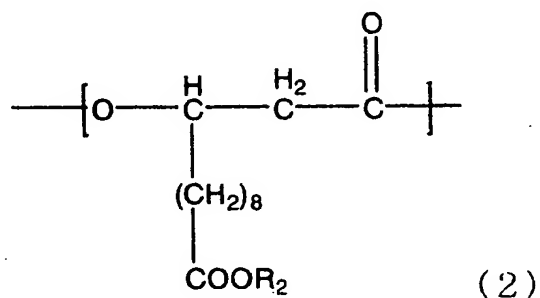


and when more than one unit exists, n and R₁ may differ from unit to unit.

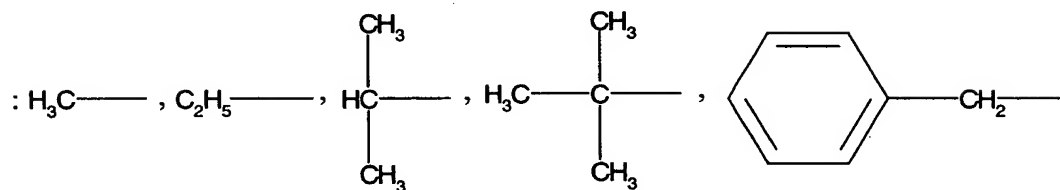
- 15 2. The charge control agent according to claim 1, wherein the 3-hydroxy- ω -carboxyalkanoic acid unit represented by the chemical formula (1) includes any one or more selected from the group consisting

of:

a 3-hydroxy-11-carboxyundecanoic acid unit
represented by the chemical formula (2):

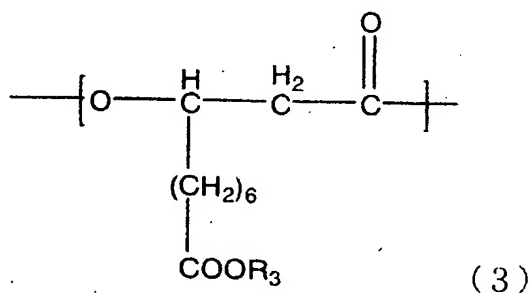


5 wherein R_2 is an H, Na or K atom, or

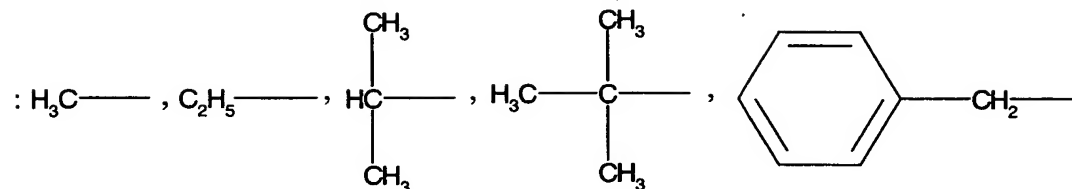


and when more than one unit exists, R_2 may differ from
unit to unit,

a 3-hydroxy-9-carboxynonanoic acid unit represented
10 by the chemical formula (3):

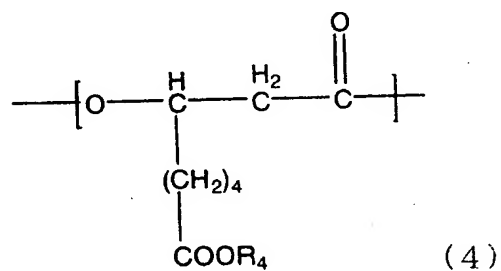


wherein R_3 is an H, Na or K atom, or

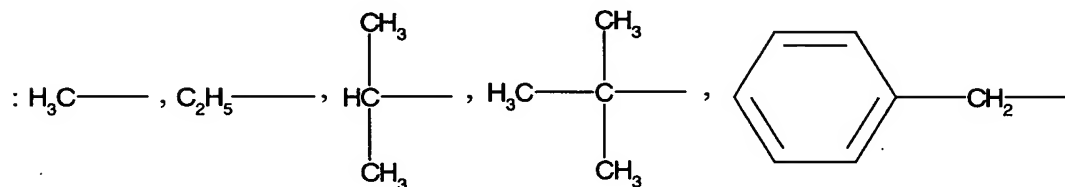


and when more than one unit exists, R_3 may differ from unit to unit,

- 5 a 3-hydroxy-7-carboxyheptanoic acid unit represented by the chemical formula (4):



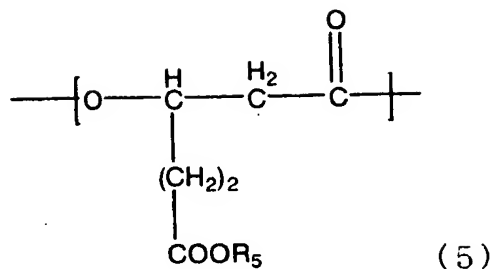
wherein R_4 is an H, Na or K atom, or



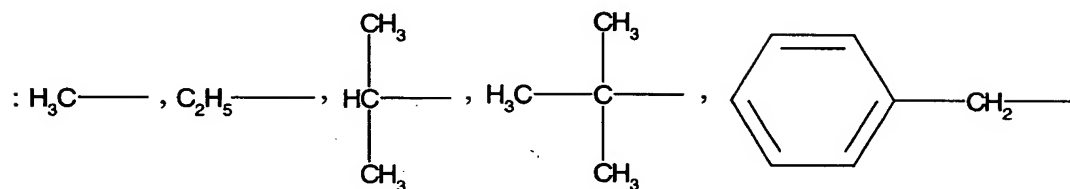
- 10 and when more than one unit exists, R_4 may differ from unit to unit,

and

a 3-hydroxy-5-carboxyvaleric acid unit represented by the chemical formula (5):

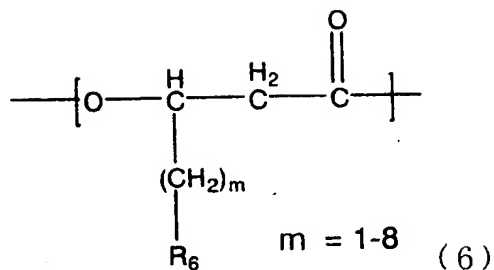


wherein R_5 is an H, Na or K atom, or



and when more than one unit exists, R_5 may differ from
 5 unit to unit.

3. The charge control agent according to
 claim 1, characterized by comprising a
 polyhydroxyalkanoate that may have, besides at least
 10 one kind of 3-hydroxy- ω -carboxyalkanoic acid
 represented by the chemical formula (1), a 3-hydroxy-
 ω -alkanoic acid unit represented by the chemical
 formula (6):



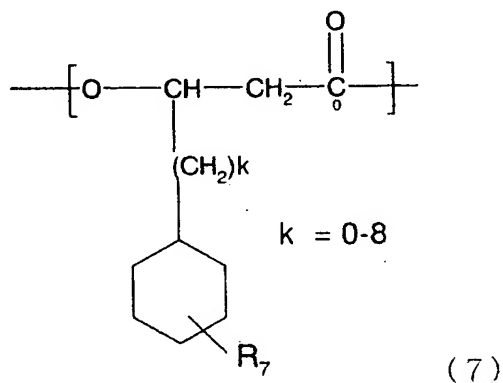
wherein m is an integer selected from the range shown in the same chemical formula; R₆ comprises a residue having either a phenyl structure or a thienyl

5 structure; and when more than one unit exists, m and R₆ may differ from unit to unit,

or

a 3-hydroxy- ω -cyclohexylalkanoic acid unit represented by the chemical formula (7):

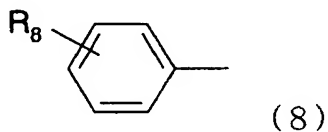
10



wherein R₇ represents a substitute in the cyclohexyl group and is an H atom, a CN group, an NO₂ group, a

halogen atom, a CH_3 group, a C_2H_5 group, a C_3H_7 group, a CF_3 group, C_2F_5 group or a C_3F_7 group; and k is an integer selected from the range shown in the same chemical formula, and when more than one unit exists,
 5 R_7 and k may differ from unit to unit.

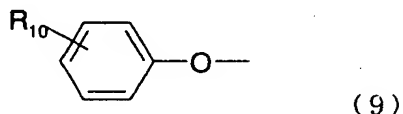
4. The charge control agent according to claim 1, characterized in that R_6 in the chemical formula (6), namely a residue having either a phenyl or thienyl structure has at least any one chemical formula selected from the group consisting of chemical formulae (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), (16), (17) and (18), and when more than one unit exists, R_6 may differ from unit to unit,
 10 wherein
 15 the chemical formula (8) is a group consisting of unsubstituted and substituted phenyl groups represented by:



20 wherein R_8 represents a substituent on the aromatic ring and is an H atom, a halogen atom, a CN group, an NO_2 group, a CH_3 group, a C_2H_5 group, a C_3H_7 group, a $\text{CH}=\text{CH}_2$ group, COOR_9 (R_9 represents any one of H, Na

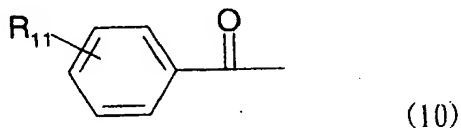
and K atoms), a CF_3 group, a C_2F_5 group or a C_3F_7 group, and when more than one unit exists, R_8 may differ from unit to unit,

the chemical formula (9) is a group consisting of
 5 unsubstituted and substituted phenoxy groups
 represented by:



wherein R_{10} represents a substituent on the aromatic ring and is an H atom, a halogen atom, a CN group, an
 10 NO_2 group, a CH_3 group, a C_2H_5 group, a C_3H_7 group, an
 SCH_3 group, a CF_3 group, a C_2F_5 group or a C_3F_7 group,
 and when more than one unit exists, R_{10} may differ
 from unit to unit,

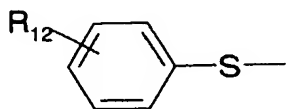
the chemical formula (10) by a group consisting of
 15 unsubstituted and substituted benzoyl groups
 represented by:



wherein R_{11} represents a substituent on the aromatic ring and is an H atom, a halogen atom, a CN group, an
 20 NO_2 group, a CH_3 group, a C_2H_5 group, a C_3H_7 group, a

CF₃ group, a C₂F₅ group or a C₃F₇ group, and when more than one unit exists, R₁₁ may differ from unit to unit, the chemical formula (11) is a group consisting of unsubstituted and substituted phenylsulfanyl groups

5 represented by:



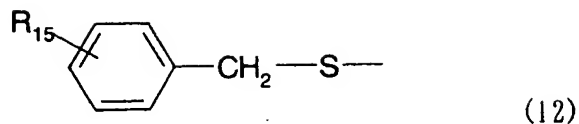
(11)

wherein R₁₂ represents a substituent on the aromatic ring and is an H atom, a halogen atom, a CN group, an NO₂ group, a COOR₁₃, an SO₂R₁₄ (R₁₃ represents any one

10 of an H atom, an Na atom, a K atom, a CH₃ group and a C₂H₅ group and R₁₄ represents any one of an OH group, an ONa group, an OK group, a halogen atom, an OCH₃ group and OC₂H₅ group), a CH₃ group, a C₂H₅ group, a C₃H₇ group, a (CH₃)₂-CH group or a (CH₃)₃-C group, and

15 when more than one unit exists, R₁₂ may differ from unit to unit,

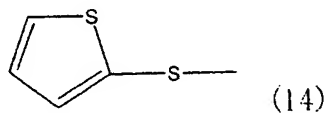
the chemical formula (12) is a group consisting of unsubstituted and substituted (phenylmethyl)sulfanyl groups represented by:



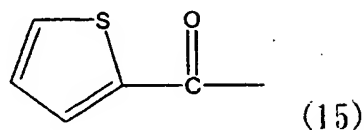
wherein R_{15} represents a substituent on the aromatic ring and is an H atom, a halogen atom, a CN group, an NO_2 group, a COOR_{16} , an SO_2R_{17} (R_{16} represents any one of an H atom, an Na atom, a K atom, a CH_3 group and a C_2H_5 group and R_{17} represents any one of an OH group, an ONa group, an OK group, a halogen atom, an OCH_3 group and OC_2H_5 group), a CH_3 group, a C_2H_5 group, a C_3H_7 group, a $(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{-CH}$ group or a $(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{-C}$ group, and when more than one unit exists, R_{15} may differ from unit to unit, the chemical formula (13) is a 2-thienyl group represented by:



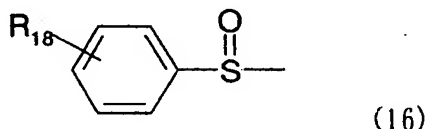
the chemical formula (14) is a 2-thienylsulfanyl group represented by:



the chemical formula (15) is 2-thienylcarbonyl group represented by:

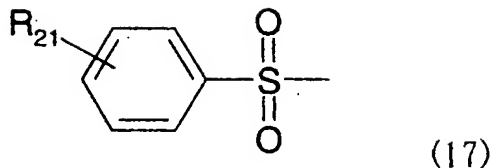


the chemical formula (16) is a group consisting of
5 unsubstituted and substituted phenylsulfinyl groups represented by:

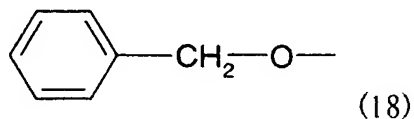


wherein R_{18} represents a substituent on the aromatic ring and is an H atom, a halogen atom, a CN group, an
10 NO_2 group, a COOR_{19} , an SO_2R_{20} (R_{19} represents any one of an H atom, an Na atom, a K atom, a CH_3 group and a C_2H_5 group and R_{20} represents any one of an OH group, an ONa group, an OK group, a halogen atom, an OCH_3 group and OC_2H_5 group), a CH_3 group, a C_2H_5 group, a
15 C_3H_7 group, a $(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{-CH}$ group or a $(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{-C}$ group, and when more than one unit exists, R_{18} may differ from unit to unit,

the chemical formula (17) is a group consisting of unsubstituted and substituted phenylsulfonyl groups
20 represented by:



wherein R_{21} represents a substituent on the aromatic ring and is an H atom, a halogen atom, a CN group, an NO_2 group, a COOR_{22} , an SO_2R_{23} (R_{22} represents any one
 5 of an H atom, an Na atom, a K atom, a CH_3 group and a C_2H_5 group and R_{23} represents any one of an OH group, an ONa group, an OK group, a halogen atom, an OCH_3 group and OC_2H_5 group), a CH_3 group, a C_2H_5 group, a C_3H_7 group, a $(\text{CH}_3)_2\text{-CH}$ group or a $(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{-C}$ group, and
 10 when more than one unit exists, R_{21} may differ from unit to unit,
 the chemical formula (18) is a group of a
 (phenylmethyl)oxy group represented by:



15 5. The charge control agent according to claim 1, wherein the powder and granular material is a toner for developing electrostatic charge images.

20 6. The charge control agent according to claim 1, wherein the number average molecular weight

of the polyhydroxyalkanoate is in the range of 1,000 to 1,000,000.

7. In a toner binder used for a toner for
5 developing electrostatic charge images, characterized by comprising the charge controlling agent according to any one of claims 1 to 6.

8. A toner for developing electrostatic
10 charge images, characterized by comprising at least a binder resin, a colorant and the charge control agent according to any one of claims 1 to 6.

9. An image forming method, comprising at
15 least a charging step of charging an electrostatic latent image carrier by applying voltage to a charging member from the outside; an electrostatic charge image forming step of forming an electrostatic charge image on the charged electrostatic latent
20 image carrier; a developing step of developing the electrostatic charge image with a toner for developing electrostatic charge images to form a toner image on the electrostatic latent image carrier; a transferring step of transferring the
25 toner image on the electrostatic latent image carrier to a recording medium; and a fixing step of fixing the toner image on the recording medium by heat,

characterized in that it uses at least a binder resin, a colorant and the charge control agent according to any one of claims 1 to 6.

5 10. The image forming method according to claim 9, characterized in that the transferring step comprises a first transferring step of transferring the toner image on the electrostatic latent image carrier to an intermediate transfer medium; and a
10 second transferring step of transferring the toner image on the intermediate transfer medium to a recording medium.

 11. An image forming apparatus, comprising at
15 least charging means of charging an electrostatic latent image carrier by applying voltage to a charging member from the outside; electrostatic charge image forming means of forming an electrostatic charge image on the charged
20 electrostatic latent image carrier; developing means of developing the electrostatic charge image with a toner for developing electrostatic charge images to form a toner image on the electrostatic latent image carrier; transferring means of transferring the toner
25 image on the electrostatic latent image carrier to a recording medium; and fixing means of fixing the toner image on the recording medium by heat,

characterized in that it uses at least a binder resin, a colorant and the charge control agent according to any one of claims 1 to 6.

5 12. The image forming apparatus according to claim 11, characterized in that the transferring means comprises first transferring means of transferring the toner image on the electrostatic latent image carrier to an intermediate transfer
10 medium; and second transferring means of transferring the toner image on the intermediate transfer medium to a recording medium.

15 13. A charge controlling method, characterized by comprising the steps of preparing the charge controlling agent according to any one of claims 1 to 6; and controlling the charged state of a toner using the charge controlling agent.